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COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION OF THEMATIC ISSUES RELATING TO THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION: XENOPHOBIA

Written statement submitted by North-South XXI, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[11 July 1998]

GE.98-13201 (E)

1. Throughout Europe a large number of people from the Maghreb, Turkey and other countries of the South have acquired the nationality of the receiving country and theoretically enjoy all the rights to which the nationals of the European country concerned are entitled. In fact, however, first or second generation nationals suffer discrimination and xenophobic treatment simply because they are Arabs, Blacks or Turks by extraction.

2. European States, which, taking their cue from the United States, often take it on themselves to lecture the world on human rights and the protection of minorities, prove in reality incapable of effectively combating such creeping xenophobia, which periodically erupts in acts of violence or even racist murders.

3. Political parties, fearing the electorate, are always extremely cautious and do not support rapid integration. Thus, for example, there are barely any local or national elected representatives of Maghreb origin in France, even though elections are held at frequent intervals, every one or two years.

4. Criminal prosecution of racist or xenophobic acts is uncommon; bans on racist or xenophobic political formations or groupings are never imposed; tolerance of racist and xenophobic intolerance is the norm; and administrations and private enterprises alike frequently adopt discriminatory attitudes: for example, refusing building permission for mosques, showing no respect for the traditional rites of Islam, or refusing to provide employment or let accommodation.

5. Clearly, then, no society or State is free of xenophobia or racism. No State, European though it be, can claim the right to pose as a model of humanism for the world, and the United Nations would be fully justified in investigating the situation in Europe in order to ascertain the real status not only of immigrants - who are being treated increasing badly - but of recently naturalized people from the countries of the South who are denied the benefits of the fundamental principle of equality before the law.